

RIP: Veteran photojournalist Santu Mofokeng has died

Sanef has announced the death of the unsung South African hero, photojournalist Santu Mofokeng, who died on Sunday 26 January 2020 at the age of 64 after a long illness.

“ The Steve Biko Foundation is deeply shocked and saddened to learn of the passing of South African news and documentary photographer, Dr. Santu Mofokeng who worked under the alias Mofokengâ. His work have insight into the lives of ordinary Black South Africans. May his soul RIP pic.twitter.com/nuskvaGSIR— SteveBikoFoundation (@BikoFoundation) [January 29, 2020](#) ”

Born in 1956 in Soweto, Mofokeng was not well-known inside his home country for much of his career but was an internationally acclaimed and talented photographer that was held in high regard mainly in Europe and in the USA.

Veteran photojournalist and former SABC CEO, Jimi Matthews said: “He offered us a different photographic view of South Africa. Different from the famous ‘struggle’ images that emerged in the eighties and onwards.”

“He was less interested in the ‘Bang Bang’ genre of photography that depicted the horror of South Africa. His was a more humanistic view of life, a person subjected to the indignities of living under apartheid,” Matthews said.

Haunting images

Mofokeng did solo exhibitions in various galleries in South Africa and around the world including Market Gallery in Johannesburg, Netherlands Photo Institute in Rotterdam; the FNAC Montparnasse in Paris, France; the Transparency International in Berlin, Germany; the Memling Museum, Bruges in Belgium; as well as David Krut Projects in New York City.

Matthews said Mofokeng’s haunting images that he captured when he visited Auschwitz were consistent with his South African photos. Matthews said:

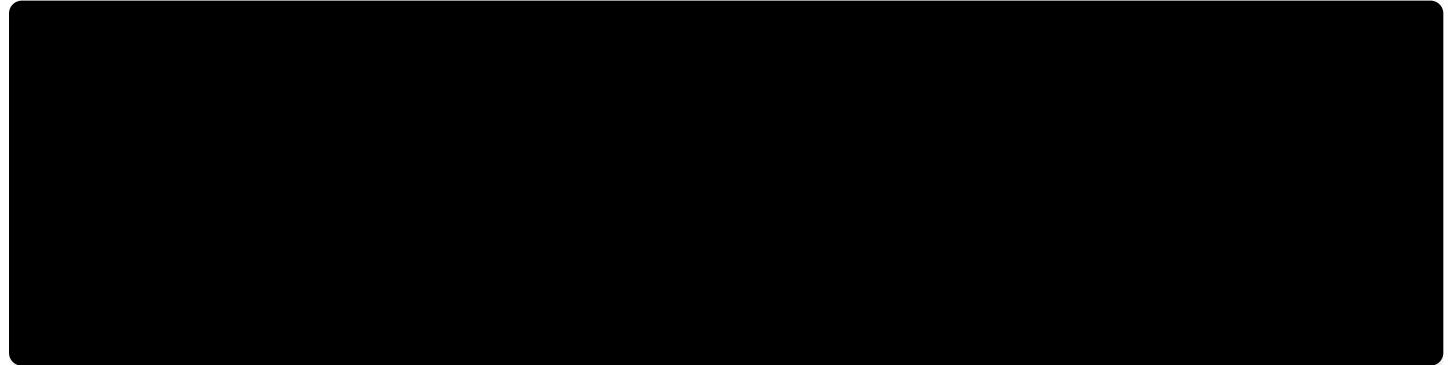
“ The railway line, fading into the mist, very reminiscent of his Train Church series. A Silent Solitude depicting a few trees (without leaves) on the bank of a lake into which the ashes of the cremated were dumped, reminding one of the desolate images he often produced when photographing the South African landscape – trees being a recurring object in many of those images. ”

In 2011, the Jeu de Paume in Paris mounted his mid-career project that went on to travel to the Kunsthalle Bern in Switzerland; the Bergen Kunsthall in Norway; the Extra City Kunsthall in Antwerp; and the Wits Art Museum in Johannesburg.

Rich body of work

Matthews lamented that the rich body of work that Mofokeng has left behind will always bear testament to the enormous talent that he possessed.

“We were blessed that he shared his humane vision of the world around him with us. May his soul rest in eternal peace,” he said.



[Santu Mofokeng](#) by [SABC Digital News](#)

Mofokeng was a multi-award-winning photographer and fellowships the list below speaks volume of the level of recognition and respect he earned in his lifetime.

- 1991: Ernest Cole Scholarship, for study at the International Center of Photography, in New York City
- 1992: 1st Mother Jones Award for Africa
- 1998: Künstlerhaus Worpswede Fellowship, Germany
- 1999: Contre Jour Residency, Marseille
- 1999: DAAD Fellowship, Worpswede, Germany
- 2001: DAAD Fellowship, Worpswede, Germany
- 2007: Ruth First Fellowship
- 2009: Prince Claus Award, Netherlands
- 2016: International Photography Prize, Fondazione Fotografia Modena – Sky Arte, Italy.

Sanef sent its condolences to the family and friends of Mr Mofokeng and said that he will be sorely missed. The family will have a private funeral. Read the full family's statement [here](#).

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